

# **VERMONT TOBACCO EVALUATION AND REVIEW BOARD**

## **BOARD MEETING**

**Wednesday, February 4, 2015**

**3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**Department of Liquor Control**

**Montpelier, VT**

## **Minutes**

Members in Attendance: Amy Brewer, Dawn Fuller-Ball, Helen Wagner, Darlene Peterson, Rhonda Williams, Rep. Bill Frank, Mike Hogan

Guests in Attendance: Julie Arel, Rebecca Ryan, Matt Shear

### **January Meeting Minutes**

Bill made motion to approve minutes from January 7, 2015

Rhonda Seconded

All voted in favor. Motion passed unanimously. Minutes Approved.

### **Announcements**

The Board welcomed Dawn Fuller-Ball as the new K-12 educator Board member.

Board members introduced themselves.

### **Public Comment**

None

### **Proposed Legislative Changes Discussion**

Recommendation is made by the Governor in the FY16 budget proposal to defund the Board's administration and external evaluation, which eliminates the Administrator position, and eliminates the evaluation contract with RTI International. The proposal changes VTERB from an independent board to an advisory board only to the VDH and convened at the request of the Commissioner of Health. The proposal limits VTERB authority to approve VDH budget and media campaigns.

Amy provided an historical description of the creation of the Board and Rebecca mentioned that there's a great descriptive document created by the tobacco task force about the Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program and the Board oversight role and responsibilities.

*Action: Rebecca will send Kate a link to this document, titled, "Blueprint for a Tobacco-Free Vermont" and Kate will get it out to Board members.*

*2/6 update: this report is now posted on the VTERB website at:*

*<http://humanservices.vermont.gov/boards-committees/tobacco-board/blueprint-for-a-tobacco-free-vermont/view>*

Bill shared that the reason behind this change is the State's efforts to address the \$100mil budget deficit. Bill explained the legislative process particularly in terms of advocating a

case for funding for a program. In order to effectively advocate, one needs to have a plan for how to fund a program, such as by reducing funding from other areas or raising additional funds in some other way.

Amy asked the Board for reaction to this proposed change. Rhonda shared that this structure has served an important role over time in the history of Vermont's Tobacco Control Program in terms of having different perspectives around the table. This was particularly significant before the existence of tobacco control guidelines (2007 and 2014).

Helen shared that the Attorney General does not oppose this proposed legislative change. She also shared that this Board change is not an outlier; there are many other Boards being changed or subsumed within the budget in order to consolidate, find savings and gain efficiencies. Helen asked if VDH has taken a position. Rhonda shared that VDH, as a department in the Governor's cabinet, supports the Governor's budget proposal overall.

Matt asked if the funding for tobacco control— the three year level funding for tobacco control (\$3.9 mil) – will still be dedicated to tobacco control. Amy and Bill shared that this change will, in fact, represent a cut in tobacco control funding.

Darlene asked if this change will result in changes to programs and services. Program services will remain, however the Board will have less of a role in terms of voice as to funding priorities, changes and programmatic shifts. The Board would still exist and maintain its membership, but would no longer be a co-equal with VDH in terms of authority over funding and programming. MSA dollars do not have requirements as to how the money is spent, or whether a board is required. Rhonda shared that although the role of the Board would change significantly, in terms of services administered by VDH there wouldn't be a change resulting from the Board change. Rhonda added that the Governor has been supportive of cessation for all Vermonters seeking cessation services.

Amy asked what happens to evaluation and what happens to the Agency and Department connections. Will VDH oversee evaluation of the overall TCP in the future or just VDH's programs and services? Rhonda explained that outside of the Board operations, VDH and DLC meet at least quarterly to stay connected around policy and enforcement and communication around that. VDH and AOE also connect regularly and seek opportunities to work together. They also have a signed MOU. The Office of the Attorney General and VDH meet monthly to discuss tobacco issues. The face time that VTERB provides is valuable, but it is not the only time agencies connect.

Rhonda and Julie shared that CDC has increased evaluation expectations, so VDH had to build in more evaluation in the next five-year funding cycle application. VDH has already begun considering supplements to the RTI evaluation contract. Since VDH will sustain a 15% cut in CDC funds, there isn't as much funding dedicated to evaluation as they would like, and they wish it could be more. Evaluation overall going forward in the absence of the RTI contract would evaluate only the VDH program.

Helen agrees with Amy that evaluation of the program as a whole is important. It is critical to maintain evaluation otherwise there's a knowledge vacuum. A program cannot tailor their approach without quantifiable measures. Amy is concerned with this change in terms of losing independent oversight and losing a source of accountability for the comprehensive program. The Board represents an opportunity for objective conversations and a vision for where the program as a whole is going.

Julie said the CDC grant serves as a source of stability and sustainability for comprehensive programmatic work in tobacco control. Guidance from CDC is a constant regardless of state leadership.

Rhonda shared that there are certainly aspects of the evaluation that will be lost and will be difficult to make up. October 2014's site visit was one of the best in terms of rich and challenging discussions. No doubt we will lose something in losing our connection with RTI.

Rhonda also mentioned that although the dollars currently dedicated to OVX/VKAT will be shifted, VDH is looking for ways to continue youth engagement that will build in efficiencies and that added collaboration with AOE means there won't be an elimination of youth programming entirely. Rhonda also described the efficiencies gained in cessation services.

Rebecca shared frustration that there was no discussion with the Board about the potential for these changes and budget cuts prior to the Governor's final FY16 budget proposal release. She also shared a worry that this is the beginning of the end of a sustainably state-funded tobacco control program.

Helen wondered where the AOE and DLC stand on this proposed legislation. There was no AOE rep to respond to that question. Mike shared that he has not taken a formal position on this, but acknowledged that VTERB has done some very important work through the years and he would not like to see the overall TCP diminished in any way.

Dawn asked about prevention education and how this change affects that work. Rhonda shared information about internal VDH changes including braided funding of VDH RFPs as an example of efforts to make systemic improvements in prevention.

A few members questioned whether there is another way to fund all aspects of this overall comprehensive program but with a small cut overall in order to continue to fund the administration and evaluation? If we did decide to propose a different way to use funds, what is the timeline for that? How quickly does VTERB need to move? House committees are hearing testimony now.

Amy asked the Board for input into where we go from here. Do we communicate the value of the Board and do we communicate a counter-proposal? Bill suggested that Kate and Amy talk with Human Services and Appropriations committees to help them to understand the Board as they work to make their FY16 budget decisions and to use the annual report to guide the conversation in order to educate House and Senate committees.

## Committee Chair Reports

### Community and School Programs

Amy shared a summary of the committee meeting held on January 13, 2015. See VTERB website under committees for minutes from this meeting. A big focus of that meeting was the future funding of VKAT/OVX.

## Other Business/Information

VDH has been invited to conduct a poster session on reaching rural smokers. Amy asked Rhonda to bring that information/research to the Board.

Office of Attorney General, in collaboration with DLC and the Department of Taxes, settled a lawsuit with a business in Barre which held both a wholesale and retailers license. This includes \$50,000 penalty and on-going reporting requirements.

Bills in the legislature:

- Proposal to increase the legal smoking age to 21 (H.93).
- Flavored liquid nicotine ban (H.59).
- Rep. Frank will be introducing a bill that will keep tobacco substitutes off retail counters. This bill will also address any place in statute that says "lighted tobacco products" with a proposal to include "...and tobacco substitutes."
- A bill will be introduced that proposes a tax increase on tobacco products of between \$1.00 and \$1.25.
- A bill will be introduced that will ban smoking within 25 feet of all buildings accessible to the public.

Matt shared that a recent Tobacco-Free UVM survey had 3,000 responders and shows a significant shift of college students' usage from cigarettes to e-cigarettes.

*Action: Matt will send the data to Kate who will send it out to VTERB.*

Meeting adjourned at 4:52pm.